

Barth Society will meet in Baltimore November 22-23, 2013

Our meeting in **Baltimore** in conjunction with the AAR will feature a Friday afternoon session from 4:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. and a Saturday morning session from 9:00 A.M. to 11:30 A.M. The presenters for the **Friday afternoon** session will be W. Travis McMaken, **Lindenwood University**, whose lecture is entitled: "*A Barthian Case for Infant Baptism*" and Hanna Reichel, **University of Halle**, whose lecture is entitled: "*Karl Barth and the Heidelberg Catechism*". This session is listed as **P22-318** in the AAR program and will be held in **CC-322 (Convention Center)**. George Hunsinger, **Princeton Theological Seminary** will preside. The **Saturday morning** session will be held in **HB-Key 9 (Hilton Baltimore)** and is listed in the AAR program as **P23-114**. The Theme of this session is: Ronald F. Thiemann in Memoriam. Speakers will be: 1) Paul Dafydd Jones, **University of Virginia**, whose lecture is entitled: "*Ronald Thiemann's Theologia Crucis: Between Martin Luther, Karl Barth and Hans Frei*"; 2) Shaun Allen Casey, **Wesley Theological Seminary**, whose lecture is entitled: "*Ronald Thiemann and the Future of Public Theology*"; 3) Mara Willard, **Harvard University**, "*Hope and Tragedy in Ronald Thiemann's Humble Sublime*"; 4) Matthew Potts, **Harvard University**, "*Presence and Re-presentation: Some Reflections on Ronald Thiemann's 'Sacramental Realism'*". George Hunsinger, **Princeton Theological Seminary** will preside.

The Board will meet for breakfast on Sunday morning November 24

It would be appreciated if those Board Members who are present would make their availability for the meeting known to the Editor who will then arrange the time and place of the meeting with them.

The Eighth Annual Barth Conference was held at Princeton Theological Seminary June 16-19, 2013. This Conference was entitled: "*Karl Barth in Dialogue: Encounters with Major Figures*" and was co-sponsored by *The Center for Barth Studies* at *Princeton Theological Seminary* and the *Karl Barth Society of North America*.

Coverage of the Conference Provided by

Nathaniel A. Maddox of The Center for Barth Studies

Throughout his life, Barth was in constant conversation with Christian theologians, ethicists, and laypersons who identified with ecclesial and intellectual traditions other than his own. Barth was no theological diplomat or chameleon;

neither was he an enclave theologian content to surround himself with the like-minded. His activism, theology, and personal correspondence all bear the traces of a theologian on the way with others. The theme of the 2013 Karl Barth

Conference underscored this dimension of Barth's theology as a precedent for theology today. With over 60 people in attendance, the conference began Sunday evening with a banquet in **Princeton Theological Seminary's** MacKay Center. **George Hunsinger**, Professor of Systematic Theology at **Princeton Seminary** and director of this year's Barth Conference, offered brief opening remarks on the speakers and conference theme.

Following Hunsinger's introduction, **John Drury**, Assistant Professor of Theology and Christian Ministry at **Indiana Wesleyan University** in **Indiana**, gave an evening lecture on Barth and Paul Tillich titled, "**The Architect and the Traffic Cop.**" Drury's lecture posed two questions about Christian spirituality that, when answered according to Barth and Tillich's respective theologies, disclose their basic points of convergence and divergence: "What is the goal of life? And, what is the way of life that corresponds to that goal?" In answer to these questions, Tillich and Barth share three formal—but no less materially determinative—points in common. (1) Tillich and Barth share a "common *orienting* concern to sustain the critical function of theology." Barth and Tillich agreed that theology is not merely a religious cipher for ethics or contingent on the historical sciences for its subject matter. Theology is charged with the critical task of testing the spirits—including one's own. But theology maintains its critical function insofar as it tests the spirits *to see whether they are from God*. Put another way, (2) "Tillich and Barth share a common *core commitment* to the irreducible subjectivity of God." God is not bound to or circumscribed within our concepts of God. Tillich expands this core commitment through his "Protestant Principle" and Barth with his doctrine of revelation. Finally, Drury argued that (3) Tillich and Barth share a common "*eschatological attunement* to the disruptive coming of the eschaton." These points of convergence simultaneously disclose contrasting views of Christian spirituality. (1) While Tillich and Barth share a common attunement to the disruptive character of the eschaton, they have opposing conceptions of eternal life. For Tillich, eternal life is creation's deified participation in the divine life—"deification without beatific

vision." Conversely, Barth describes eternal life not as participation in the divine life but as covenantal fellowship found in faithful witness to the resurrected Christ—"beatific vision without deification." (2) Tillich and Barth's shared commitment to God's unsublatable subjectivity is expressed in divergent conceptual categories. According to Drury, Tillich's concept of essentialization clarifies how humans participate in the divine *life* vis-à-vis the divine *being*—a distinction that gestures toward God's irreducible subjectivity. Alternatively, Barth's concept of Jesus Christ's self-attestation clarifies how Christian witness participates in Christ without being directly identified with him. Finally, (3) though Tillich and Barth upheld the critical function of theology, they had different "coping strategies." Tillich's theology is a critical theology of culture, disclosing the positive aspects of cultural forms as they contribute to the goal of eternal life. Barth's theology, on the other hand, is a critical theology of church proclamation, evaluating the church's proclamation of eternal life according to the Word of God. Drury concluded his lecture with a claim summarizing Tillich and Barth's differing views of Christian spirituality: "Paul Tillich's eschatology underwrites a spirituality of Being, whereas Karl Barth's eschatology underwrites a spirituality of Being-with."

Peter Casarella, Associate Professor of Theology at the **University of Notre Dame** in **Indiana**, kicked off the second day of the conference with a lecture on "**Karl Barth and Joseph Ratzinger.**" Beginning with Ratzinger's first recorded engagement with Barth's theology in 1950s, Casarella offered a diachronic and thematic survey of their interactions. Ratzinger first engaged Barth in a review of Hans Küng's *Justification*—wherein Küng had argued that the differences between Barth's theology and the Catholic Church were not church dividing. Though Ratzinger praised Küng's erudition and some aspects of Barth's theology, he believed that Küng failed to adequately address significant differences deriving from Barth's actualism (e.g., differences on the *intra nos* of sanctification, Barth's *simul*, the question of merit, and Barth's sacramentology). Ratzinger's second major interaction with Karl Barth's theology came in

1967. Ratzinger visited Basel and attended Barth's seminar on the doctrine of revelation and Vatican II. Having read Ratzinger's recent essay on revelation and tradition, Barth was pleased with Ratzinger's careful distinction between the "letter and spirit" of scripture and his attention to the unity of the Old and New Testaments in witnessing to Christ. Ratzinger's perspective on Barth's doctrine of revelation was more extensive and even more ambivalent. In his 1977 *Eschatology: Death and Eternal Life*, Ratzinger claimed that Barth's second Romans commentary rightly set the agenda for reflecting on the otherness of God's kingdom. Without supplement, however, the eschatology of Romans II had led many of Barth's followers in the direction of a "shapeless actualism." Casarella turned finally to Ratzinger's 2001 address, "The Ecclesiology of the Constitution of the Church, Vatican II, *Lumen Gentium*." He argued that Ratzinger's form of reflection on the church was taken from Barth, even though the content of his ecclesiology was Augustinian. For Ratzinger and Barth, reflection on the origin of the church must precede ecumenical dialogue. Also, Ratzinger's Mariology in the address is not necessarily at odds with a Barthian ecclesiology. In conclusion, for Ratzinger, Casarella claimed, "Barth was an authoritative theologian and fellow traveler in rethinking the task of theology of and for the church."

Following Casarella, **Nicholas Healy**, Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at **St. John's University in New York**, presented a lecture titled, "**A Conversation between Barth and Aquinas: Two Options in the Christian Life.**" As a matter of contemporary pastoral significance, Healy proposed that we take Barth and Aquinas as "leading examples of two options of what the Christian life is, how we respond to the gospel, why we should respond in a particular way, and to what end." Healy parsed Barth's and Thomas' respective accounts of the Christian life by using David Kelsey's three divisions for reflecting on theological claims and practices: the logic of belief (dogmatics), the logic of how we come to believe (apologetics), and the logic of the life of faith (morality). Use of the logics reveals that Barth and Thomas share a "fundamental methodological agreement" on how to go about

giving an account of the Christian life. Both prioritize the logic of belief, starting with an account of God's gracious action toward us revealed definitively in Jesus Christ and witnessed in the Holy Scriptures. Only after establishing the reality of God's grace do they turn to the Christian life of response to God's grace. This fundamental agreement should not, however, obscure their different accounts of Christian life or their differing pastoral situations. For Thomas, "there is a single description of the Christian life." Through our redemption in Christ and the grace of the Holy Spirit, individuals are drawn to push themselves, to seek happiness first and foremost in our coming life with God on the other side of eternity. Thomas' account of the Christian life privileges the religious life freed from the distractions of marriage, money, and temporal commitments (the *status perfectionis*); alternative ways of life are unfortunate yet "necessary modifications" of the monastic life. Healy argued that Thomas' account also reflects his pastoral situation, which placed emphasis on the power of discursive reasoning, individual effort, and likelihood of eternal punishment for most people. Barth's account of the Christian life and his pastoral situation were quite different. For Barth, salvation "is achieved *extra nos, pro nobis*" and for all in Christ. Christians rightly accept the gift of eternal life through their unique opportunity to respond anew each and every day with gratitude and obedience to God. Instead of a single description of the Christian life, Barth's account highlights the multitude of forms that the Christian life might take. Even more, Healy argued, Barth "replaces moral rule with a Christian vocation without becoming voluntaristic." God's summons to obedience provides constancy to the Christian life, and God alone is capable of rightly assessing our response to our summons. In closing, Healy suggested that Catholics might find resources in Barth's account of the Christian life for acknowledging "unsatisfactory" or otherwise ordinary Christians, as integral members of the Church according to their unique callings before God here and now.

Paul D. Molnar, Professor of Systematic Theology at **St. John's University in New York** opened the Monday afternoon session with a lucid lecture entitled "**The Importance of the**

Doctrine of Justification in the Theology of Thomas F. Torrance and of Karl Barth.” “One of the crucial factors that unite Barth and Torrance,” Molnar argued, “is their application of the doctrine of justification by faith to all aspects of theology.” For Barth and Torrance alike, our justification and sanctification are accomplished outside ourselves in the person and work of Jesus Christ. Torrance in particular stressed that the Son’s active and passive obedience to the Father happen contemporaneously throughout the whole of his life and for our sake. Because we ourselves are not capable of securing our own salvation at any point in our lives, Christ accomplished both our objective and subjective reconciliation through his faith, disclosing that we cannot in any way look to ourselves for our salvation—not even our faith. Molnar further demonstrated how Barth and Torrance applied the doctrine of justification to the doctrine of revelation. Human analogies and conceptions do not bear within themselves the capacity to correspond or refer to God. According to Barth, human speech and thought must be taken up by the grace of God and determined for participation in the veracity of God’s self-knowledge (II/1, §27). As such, even human speech about God must be killed in order to be made alive in Christ. Molnar circumspectly noted that Barth and Torrance do not make the doctrine of justification into a master concept even as they apply it to various doctrinal loci. The origin, meaning, and end of the doctrine of justification is the person and work of the resurrected Jesus Christ. Molnar then demonstrated how “the doctrine of justification binds Barth and Torrance together” through a close analysis of their respective views of religion. Torrance and Barth believed that religion was a fundamental expression of human autarchy and self-justification. No religion, not even the Christian religion, is true in itself. Rather, the truth of any religion must follow after the reality of God’s self-revelation in Christ. According to Torrance, history shows us that the Christian religion can become “a form of man’s cultural self-expression or the means whereby he seeks to give sanction to a socio-political way of life, and even be the means whereby he seeks to justify and sanctify himself before God” (*God and Rationality*, 69). When applied to religion, the doctrine of justification proclaims that Christ

directs us away from theological attempts to save ourselves. In the final section of his paper, Molnar turned to two points where Barth and Torrance diverge, arguing that these divergences arose as “both theologians sought to be consistent in allowing Christ himself to dictate the truth of what they meant to say.” Though largely in agreement, Torrance and Barth differed with respect to the doctrine of the immanent Trinity since Torrance thought there was an element of subordination in Barth’s doctrine. As early as *CD* I/1 but distinctly in *CD* IV/1 Barth read the economic subordination of the Son back into the inner-life of God. While Barth was not a subordinationist, he “blurred the distinction between the processions and missions” by ascribing a super- and subordination and a *prius* and *posterius* to the inner relations of the Father and Son at that point in his thinking. Torrance rejected this tendency in Barth and associated it with the confusion of the order of the trinitarian persons with their being. Molnar then turned to Torrance’s “new natural theology.” Torrance attempted to construct a theology of nature by including natural theology within revelation, Molnar argued. But in the process his thinking sometimes exhibited vestiges of the old natural theology as when he spoke of “something like the signature of the Creator in the depths of contingent being” (*Divine and Contingent Order*, 73). Barth likely would have seen this as a breach of Torrance’s best theological insights as he insisted that “even if we only lend our little finger to natural theology, there necessarily follows the denial of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. A natural theology which does not strive to be the only master is not a natural theology” (II/1, 173). Overall, Molnar concluded, Torrance and Barth “are not in fundamental disagreement.” And their divergences do not play a basic role in their respective theologies.

Following Molnar, **Cherith Fee Nordling**, Associate Professor of Theology at **Northern Seminary in Illinois**, gave a lecture on “**Karl Barth and Elizabeth Johnson**”. Nordling began by noting that it is the theologian’s task to test the spirits of prophecy with charity and according to the Word of God revealed in Jesus Christ. This testing applies no less to those of us who sense a disconnect between the gospel and the church’s

teachings on gender and sexuality. In the first half of her paper, Nordling offered an interpretive summary of Elizabeth Johnson's theology with reference to classical Trinitarian theology. According to Nordling, Johnson draws on Rahner's transcendentalism to ground her theological reflections and criticisms in women's experience; this experience discloses an ontology of divine-human mutual relationality. Contrary to classical theism, Johnson argues, God's being necessarily permeates the world and is ontologically conditioned by the world. Furthermore, all humans, particularly women, immediately and pre-reflectively experience God, and all speech about God derives from this personal experience. This ontology, Nordling argued, renders the truth of dogmatic statements relative to individual experiences. Consequently, the triune name of God does not function analogically but metaphorically by "synthesizing the three-fold human experience of God's relating to the world through creation, redemption, and reconciliation." Johnson's relational ontology also precludes the need for a savior. Though not uniquely divine, Jesus is unique as our paradigm for human openness to the experience of the divine. Nordling concluded her summary with two evaluative remarks: (1) Because Johnson claims that God is unknowable, her relational ontology cannot correspond to God or be used to test other conceptions of God. (2) By making men dependent on women's experience for the truth of God, Johnson "reverts to sexism of the worst kind, ontological superiority." The second half of Nordling's paper recommended Karl Barth's theology as an orthodox and coherent alternative to Johnson. Whereas Johnson's theology logically prohibits judgment about theological and ethical truth-claims, Barth's doctrine of revelation "reminds us that the criterion of our God-talk is not our general experience but the revelation of God in Jesus Christ." While God remains other than us, Nordling argued, true knowledge of God's triune identity and authentic human experience is possible because we indwell God's self-knowledge through personal encounter with Jesus Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

On Monday evening **D. Stephen Long**, Professor of Systematic Theology at **Marquette University**

in **Wisconsin**, presented some original archival research in his lecture, "**Saving Karl Barth: von Balthasar's Preoccupation.**" Tracing the history of Balthasar's efforts to publish *The Theology of Karl Barth*, Long indicated that Balthasar played an influential role in Barth's changing perspective on the *analogia entis*. Balthasar first met Barth in April 1940 with hopes of engaging in an extended conversation on Catholic doctrine, especially the *analogia entis*. Barth invited Balthasar to attend his seminar on the Council of Trent. Despite their seminar debates, Balthasar failed to convince Barth that his rejection of the *analogia entis* was misplaced. Shortly thereafter, in 1941, Balthasar presented Barth with the unpublished original edition of his book on Barth's theology, *Analogia: Ein Gespräch mit Karl Barth*. The censors unanimously rejected Balthasar's petition for publication for two reasons. The first was theological; the book did not uphold Vatican I's teaching on the two-fold knowledge of God and morality. The censors' interpretation of the book, Long suggested, was likely correct. Throughout his work, Balthasar sharply rejected the notion of a natural knowledge of God as "an invention of Catholic theology." When the book was finally published in 1951 he received similar criticisms from Neo-Thomist theologians. In response, Balthasar accused modern Catholic theology of creating false divisions between theology and philosophy and failing to recognize the supernatural quality of human nature. Against Barth, on the other hand, Balthasar argued that nature does play a role in the creature's salvation. Barth was right to challenge Catholic teaching on nature and grace, but his argument was misplaced. The *analogia entis* and *potentia obedientialis* were red herrings and already implicitly at work in Barth's later theology; the doctrine of pure nature was the real invention. The censors also rejected the original edition on political grounds. As a Jesuit, Balthasar was prohibited from teaching in churches and schools. The censors feared the book would attract unwanted attention. Following a brief synopsis of Balthasar's contentious relationship with the Swiss authorities, Long suggested that Barth's later reappraisal of the *analogia entis* and Catholicism after Vatican II could be attributed, at least in part, to his theological friendship with Balthasar. Long

concluded his lecture by asking, what should we learn from Balthasar's preoccupation with Karl Barth? He suggested that Barthians should reflect again on Balthasar's interpretation of Barth—especially with respect to the immanent/economic Trinitarian distinction and problems nascent to dialectical theology.

Tuesday's morning session began with a fascinating lecture on **Sergei Bulgakov and Karl Barth** by **Brandon Gallaher**, Fellow at the **Notre Dame Institute for Advanced Study in Indiana**. Gallaher introduced his lecture by noting that Barth's theology might very well be far less classical than the Orthodox care to admit. He then turned to the theology of the Russian Orthodox theologian Sergei Bulgakov. He underscored Barth and Bulgakov's elective affinities, particularly with respect to the doctrine of the Trinity and election. Gallaher proceeded to argue that a comparison of Barth and Bulgakov could contribute to a new perspective on the decade old debate in Barthian scholarship concerning the ontological relationship between the immanent and economic Trinity. Gallaher then went on to characterize Bulgakov as a theologian of paradox and dialectic. Bulgakov's "theological antinomianism" maintained logical antinomies across doctrinal loci in efforts to witness to the reality of God, which is beyond logical rational circumscription. For instance, Bulgakov maintained that God is simultaneously "the absolute not is," and completely perfect in Godself. Creation likewise is "part of God's self-definition," but God does not need the world because of any external compulsion. While these antinomies were synthesized in his later theology, Gallaher suggested that Bulgakov's earlier theology maintained both God's "absolute immanence and absolute transcendence" as equiprimordially basic to God's being. He then asked, how might Bulgakov aid our interpretation of Barth's Trinitarian theology and the doctrine of election? Rather than lending support to either side in the debate, Gallaher offered a new interpretation: if it is true that Barth's theology remains dialectical throughout his career—and Gallaher believes it does—perhaps Barth's mature theology intentionally gives two logically incommensurable descriptions of the Trinity and election that can only be held together in faith.

On the one hand, God is perfectly free and complete in Godself. On the other hand, God eternally chooses to be God in Christ and becomes "freely dependent on creation." Faith without the crutch of rationalism is free to attest both.

Matthew Baker, Ph.D. Candidate in Systematic Theology at **Fordham University** in **New York**, gave a meticulously researched lecture titled, "*Offenbarung, Philosophie und Theologie: Karl Barth and Florovsky in Dialogue.*" Drawing from essays, letters, and unpublished archival literature, Baker argued that an ongoing "manifest mutual disagreement" existed between Barth and the Eastern Orthodox theologian Georges Florovsky. While Barth and Florovsky first engaged in indirect communication through their mutual friend Fritz Lieb, their initial personal exchange came in 1931 when Florovsky presented a lecture on *Offenbarung, Philosophie und Theologie* at the University of Bonn. In his lecture, Florovsky argued for a *philosophia perrenis*, revealed as "history becomes transformed from within" through the grace of God. Barth vehemently disagreed saying, "The objectivity of revelation is not to be understood by man shrinking himself to a mathematical point." According to Florovsky, they discussed the matter all throughout the night without reaching an agreement. Furthermore, Baker argued, Barth's actualism regularly came between Barth and Florovsky on a variety of theological issues. Barth's actualism lead Florovsky to conclude, "In Barth's conception there really was no church at all," and in a 1959 essay, Florovsky argued that Barth's doctrine of election crowds out the significance of human activity in the present. Despite being critical of each other on several doctrinal points, Barth and Florovsky shared noteworthy theological convergences. Both believed that theological reflection must begin with the word of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Both were champions of realist analogical speech about God, and they shared a common criticism of Niebuhr's Christian realism. Baker's historical and theological survey demonstrated that some current interpretations of Barth are better suited to Barthian-Orthodox rapprochement than others. In conclusion, he suggested that Torrance's interpretation of Barth

held exceptional promise for future ecumenical dialogue.

The Tuesday afternoon session began with a lecture on “**Christian Faith and Social Action in Jon Sobrino and Karl Barth**” by Nathan Hieb, Graduate of Princeton Theological Seminary and Youth Pastor at the **Chinese Evangel Mission Church** in New Jersey. According to Hieb, “Karl Barth preserves the impetus for Christian social action on behalf of the poor while providing guidance to contemporary liberation theologians on remaining within the traditional orthodox faith.” Using Aristotle’s teleology from the *Nicomachean Ethics* as an analytical tool, he showed that Sobrino understands Christ’s ministry and Christian witness as *means to the end* of a just community, but not ends in themselves. Christ’s person and atoning work are “instrumental” and subordinate to the final end of a just community. In his crucifixion, Christ bears the effects of sin, demonstrating that injustice can be extinguished as the effects of sin are borne for the sake of others. Christians are charged to “reproduce Christ’s own life” and bear sin in the same way Christ bore sin for the sake of the coming kingdom of God. While Sobrino does not shirk the church’s elemental responsibility to live for the poor, he leaves us wondering, “could a different philosophical or religious system better announce or bring about the ethical community?” Hieb then turned to Barth’s doctrine of the atonement and Christian vocation as orthodox alternatives that uphold the Christian’s fundamental responsibility to care for the poor. For Barth, Hieb argued, Christian speech and merciful actions are both ends in themselves established by their source and goal: the proclamation of God’s reconciliation with the world in Christ. Christians properly witness to Christ and participate in his prophetic ministry when they act in merciful solidarity with the wretched of the earth: “Because it is a matter of knowledge, speech must come first; but because it is a matter of knowledge speech cannot be without act.” Furthermore, Christ is the guarantor of the coming eschatological renewal of human life. Consequently, Barth does not take an instrumental view of Christ’s work or Christian speech. The Christian’s vocation to witness to

Christ through word and deed is an end in itself. Barth’s teachings on Christian faith and social action, therefore, pose a challenge—not just to liberation theologians but orthodox theologians as well.

Raymond Carr, Assistant Professor of Religion at **Pepperdine University** in **California**, wrapped up the Tuesday plenary sessions with a lecture titled “**James Cone and Karl Barth: Beyond Ontological Blackness.**” Instead of asking the tired question, “Is James Cone a Barthian?” Carr recommended a different question: “What does Barth look like to Cone?” He argued that Cone—explicitly in his *A Theology of Black Liberation* and implicitly thereafter—“turned Barth on his head” without contradicting Barth’s fundamental commitments. By taking up Paul Tillich’s correlationism, Cone was not rejecting the revelation of God as the fundamental starting point of theological reflection. Instead, God’s revelation gives humans the capacity to reinterpret and respond to their own self-perception, cultural experiences, and the contemporary situation—including the socialized practices of racism. As Carr put it, “The logos of the *sache* reinterprets the logic of color symbolism.” Furthermore, Cone’s black ontology does not entail that God has been grasped from the conditions of the black experience; rather, the black experience has been taken up and directed by God against racialized practices. While Cone’s method, tone, and emphasis are different from Barth’s, his theology of revelation and Christian witness is not. Though Cone later avoids explicit reference to Barth’s theology, Cone’s later theology is still fundamentally determined by Barth’s basic theological commitments. Since, in Barth’s words, “method is arbitrary,” Carr concluded, we should consider the fact that academic theologians are prone to confuse their methods, doctrines, and a racialized academic culture with the Word of God itself—all while believing that they are doing theology dialectically. To do theology dialectically we must attend to the subjective aspect of Christ’s call on our lives.

On Wednesday morning, **George Hunsinger** presented the final conference lecture titled, “**Schleiermacher and Barth: Two Divergent**

Views of Christ and Salvation.” With a density of information and analysis that defies summary, Hunsinger argued that Schleiermacher’s *Glaubens-lehre* was an attempt to articulate the Christian faith without recourse to Nicene Trinitarian theology or Chalcedonian Christology. Hunsinger first considered Schleiermacher’s doctrine of Trinity. He argued that there is an Arian element in Schleiermacher. For Schleiermacher, Jesus Christ cannot be *homousion* with the Father. The person of Christ began only when he became man. Consequently, there are no Trinitarian distinctions in the eternal Godhead; instead, the persons of the Trinity come into being in the economy of redemption. As such, there is “a hidden fourth” in Schleiermacher’s theology—a single divine act behind the Trinitarian relations. In contrast, Barth went to great lengths to identify himself with Athanasius and Nicaea, and his doctrine of the Trinity remained orthodox throughout the *Church Dogmatics*. Hunsinger then considered Schleiermacher’s doctrine of the person of Christ. Here Hunsinger highlighted the “Nestorian character” of Schleiermacher’s Christology. Schleiermacher ascribes divinity to Jesus because he had a fully-actualized God-consciousness. The divine activity upon Jesus’ perfectly receptive God-consciousness results in “two concurring subjects or at least principles of activity.” As a result, Schleiermacher’s Christ is not a unified person. Hunsinger also gave a brief summary of Barth’s Chalcedonian Christology as an orthodox alternative. In the final section of his paper, Hunsinger turned to Schleiermacher’s doctrine of Christ’s work, specifically the atonement. Though Schleiermacher’s Christ does mediate salvation to us, Christ’s death has no atoning significance for sin. Christ’s saving significance is only revealed in Christ’s death and through the proclamation of the church. Christ’s death does not express God’s love for us or God’s rejection of sin. Our redemption “takes place by repetition.” It is not once for all. By contrast, Barth had a high view of both Christ’s person and work. Since only God incarnate can save us from sin and death, Karl Barth believed that Christ had to be both truly God and truly human in one subject. Hunsinger’s broad exposition of Schleiermacher’s Trinitarian theology and

Christology demonstrated the difficulty and pitfalls that beset modern mediating theologies.

After Hunsinger’s paper, the eighth annual Barth Conference came to an end with a Q&A panel. Questions largely focused on the challenges of ecumenical dialogue and the ways in which Barth’s theology might address some of these challenges. Questions about the church as the body of Christ, the sacraments, and intra-ecclesial conversion comprised the bulk of the conversation. There were also disagreements about the meaning of Barth’s claim that the church is “the earthly-historical form of the existence of Jesus Christ” (CD IV/2: 55 et al.).

Along with the plenary sessions, **George Hunsinger** led mid-day worship services on Monday and Tuesday. On the whole, the Center for Barth Studies received positive feedback from the conference. **The conference lectures will be published in a single volume in due course.**

The topic of the 2014 Ninth Annual Karl Barth Conference is “Karl Barth, Jews, and Judaism.” Check the Center for Barth Studies website at <http://libweb.ptsem.eu/collections/barth> for further details, updates, book reviews, and other information about the latest in Barth studies.

Book Review

Persons, Powers, and Pluralities: Toward a Trinitarian Theology of Culture. Eric G. Flett. Princeton Theological Monograph Series. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2011. 253 pp. Paperback, \$29.00.

A large body of literature has grown around culture as not only a site of theological investigation but also a shared space of activity of theological importance. With roots in the correlationist methodology of Tillich, liberal Protestant and Roman Catholic theologians such as Peter Hodgson,¹ Edward Farley,² and David

¹ Hodgson, *Winds of the Spirit: A Constructive Christian Theology* (Westminster John Knox, 1994); idem., *Liberal Theology: A Radical Vision* (Fortress, 2007).

Tracy³ took culture as the starting point of theological reflection, the public space from which questions derive and to which answers are given. Postliberal theologians, in response, held culture to be no less important but reconfigured the nature of the theological relationship. Perhaps the most paramount text affiliated with this “school” is Kathryn Tanner’s *Theories of Culture* (Fortress, 1997), which not only contests static constructs of culture but argues for Christianity itself as part of a fluid culture of arguments and practices. Another sort of response emerged with Radical Orthodoxy⁴ in the UK, and some of its North American Evangelical⁵ adopters; while not agreeing entirely on “genealogies” and the precise configuration of the relationship, works on this side of the register tend toward positing a sharp, binary distinction between Christianity and culture, the latter as a porous secular construct of modernity, with some even embodying the specter of the old totalizing Christendom.

While the works above are provocative, constructive adventures—essentially putting forward grand recalibrations of the theological task itself—a spate of recent titles have emerged focusing on particular theologians and excavating the intersections within their theological work and broader cultural themes and applications. Several volumes on the thought of Karl Barth, for instance, have appeared in recent years, indicating the relevance of his theology to the study of culture.⁶ Eric G. Flett’s volume, *Persons,*

Powers, and Pluralities, on the work of the Scottish theologian Thomas F. Torrance, exemplifies this type of literature.

What is surprising—indeed, welcome—about this volume is that Torrance’s work has the perception of being quite arid, free of constraint by or concern for culture as integral to theology. His engagement with science might be the closest point of contact, but even here there is a perceived reification of an antiseptic quality. Of course, as this volume demonstrates quite ably, that is a rueful misperception. In fact, Flett’s volume provides a sustained argument to the contrary, elevating Torrance’s work as housing a positive, constructive potential for a dogmatic ground to an articulation of a proper theology of culture that can engage faithfully and evangelically with human culture, particularly cultural plurality (5, 217-8).

Flett identifies three major, interlocking dogmatic coordinates in Torrance’s theology, namely, the doctrines of God, creation, and anthropology, from which a theology of culture may emerge. That contention shapes the formal structure of the book. In a sense, Flett’s work acts as a triptych through significant, and technically complex dogmatic terrain in Torrance and lays out a path for understanding how those realities apply to the human social ecosystem. At the same time, the book bears a material shape that hails from Torrance’s own conviction that the Trinity is the “ground and grammar” of all theological discourse, and as such it is Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity that forms the matrix for the exposition and constructive reflection (ch 1); the Trinitarian life of God, as Flett demonstrates, “condition[s] and determine[s]” “God’s activity as Creator,” (4) which runs through the contingent life of creation (ch 2-3) and the human person that stands as priest and mediator within the created order (ch 4). The position of the human being, as a contingent creature embedded within, yet distinct from the created order, and provided with a doxological task of mediation (from the Triune God to the Triune God), serves as the hinge for the constructive proposal of a

² Farley, *Ecclesial Man: A Social Phenomenology of Faith and Reality* (Fortress, 1975); idem., *Ecclesial Reflection: An Anatomy of Theological Method* (Fortress, 1982).

³ Tracy, *Blessed Rage for Order: The New Pluralism in Theology* (Harper, 1985); idem., *The Analogical Imagination: Christian Theology and the Culture of Pluralism* (Crossroad, 1998).

⁴ E.g., John Milbank, *Theology and Social Theory* (Blackwell, 1991); Milbank, Catherine Pickstock, Graham Ward, eds., *Radical Orthodoxy: A New Theology* (Blackwell, 1998)

⁵ E.g., James K. A. Smith, *Introducing Radical Orthodoxy: Mapping a Post-secular Theology* (Baker, 2004); idem., *Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation* (Baker, 2009).

⁶ E.g., Paul Louis Metzger, *The Word of Christ and the World of Culture: Sacred and Secular Through the Theology of Karl Barth* (Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003);

Jessica DeCou, *Playful, Glad, and Free: Karl Barth and a Theology of Popular Culture* (Fortress, 2013).

Trinitarian theology of culture—one that “root[s] the origin, *telos*, and transformation of human culture in the Triune being of God” (4).

One of the chief strengths of this volume is the lucid exposition of Torrance’s work on signal doctrines, which is quite diffuse and distributed throughout numerous papers, essays, and full length publications. Several of Flett’s chapters act as tight, coherent summaries of pivotal doctrines and concepts in Torrance, brought together in systematic fashion and shown in their proper interrelationship; as well, Flett brings proper attention to aspects of Torrance’s thought that are typically overlooked or neglected, such as his pneumatology (30-59, 103-115), anthropology (116-138), and eschatology (23-24, 45-50, 103-115, 130-134, 190-94).

The chapter likely to receive the lion’s share of attention—and the one that exemplifies Flett’s work as an exegete of Torrance—will be, no doubt, that on the doctrine of the Trinity. This chapter is the keystone to the work and in it Flett, quite skillfully, unpacks reflections crucial to Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity. Chief among these are the antecedent ontological ground of the immanent Trinity (12-14, 17-18); the coinherent identity of the ontological/immanent and economic Trinity (31-32); the primacy, or grounding, of the economic activity of God as creator in God’s being as Triune (6-9, 13-14); the epistemological ordering of human knowledge of the Trinity through the economy, which neither alters nor severs the link with or ground in the immanent Trinity and which does not posit knowledge of God in addition to or beyond knowledge of *this* God (hence an affirmation of the identity of God with God’s revelation alongside a rejection of natural theology) (10-12, 16-17, 20, 32-34, 36); and the critical role *homousios* plays in Torrance’s Trinitarian work, particularly its importance to the being of the Son and the Spirit (19-28, 30-43), especially in coordination with the concept of *perichoresis* (the exposition of the *homousios* of the Spirit in Torrance is exceptionally illuminating). The latter, of course, highlights the project of retrieval of the patristic tradition, particularly the heritage of Athanasius and the Cappadocians, that was so vital to Torrance. If a deficiency should be noted

here, however, it is the surprising absence of attention to other interlocutors significant to Torrance on this very issue: notably Karl Barth (who was not only paramount to Torrance’s theology as a whole, but with whom he carried on a spirited, even critical, dialogue around the doctrine of the Trinity); Karl Rahner (to whose work Torrance offered one of the most trenchant, yet irenic, correctives); and the contemporary Eastern Orthodox tradition. Torrance’s ecumenical work with the Eastern Orthodox was an endeavor especially close to his heart, resulting in the historic agreement paper on the doctrine of the Trinity; its inclusion here would have added a rich layer, especially in the discussion on the being of the Father (10-14). Of course, in a work of this sort it is not possible to cover every conceivable angle or influence, and given the labyrinth nature of Torrance’s work and the array of sources across which it is distributed, Flett provides both a reliable guide to the complex structures of Torrance’s doctrine of the Trinity and an identifiable, progressive argument about that doctrine—that it conditions both God’s act as creator and our knowledge of God, most especially our saving knowledge in the work of the Father through the Son by the Spirit; this, in turn, brings to light the cultural relevance of Torrance’s fine-tuned work around the Trinitarian logic of the incarnation: “the incarnation is a union, not only with *human* life, but with the entire ecology of human life, through the vicarious humanity of Christ. The Spirit unites us to *this* human, and unites all creation to *this* humanity. Through this union, the future of the created order is both revealed and secured, and the goal and basis of human cultural activity established” (47).

The Trinity in act, antecedently grounded in the being of the Trinity, and the consequent knowledge of God and position of the creature within that act are the subjects of the subsequent chapters. Flett aims here to elucidate in Torrance the “ontological substructure of our existence,” based as it is in the Triune act of creation, in which the social form of creaturely existence finds its ground in the relational, hypostatic existence of God as Trinity (though not identical to it as such). The author unpacks this over two

chapters on Torrance's doctrine of creation. In a very fine, concise presentation, Flett works through the key structuring concept for Torrance in his doctrine of creation, that of order; Flett highlights how, for Torrance, order is conditioned by the relational order of the being of God (66), and is built into the contingent nature of the created realm; order is, as well, as Flett notes, a redemptive movement that opposes the disruptive nature, or subversion of order, in created fallenness. The incarnation is, as should be unsurprising to readers of Torrance, the pivotal link: "the incarnation is [the] event that binds together the created order with the divine order, redeeming the fallen order and inaugurating an eschatological order whereby the actual (fallen) order of the world is driven toward the 'order that ought to be,' realized partially in this and consummated in the eschaton" (62). It is within this thrust that the vocation and calling of the human being is located—to be "priests of creation" and "mediators of order" (ch 4)—which Flett explicates in a concise, but dense, chapter on Torrance's anthropology. This chapter, essentially, divides into two parts: in the first instance, Flett expositis the constitutive character of the human being as person (what he describes as the human being as "multi-stringed instrument")—embodied, personal, relational (the latter demonstrating the application of Torrance's development of 'onto-relationality' to the anthropology); subsequently, Flett turns to the role—the vocational task—of humanity within the wider created structure (the "tuning up"), based upon the human as a cultural and eschatological being. Under this heading, Flett argues the priestly and mediatory functions of humanity for Torrance, that humanity mediates order as a cultural task given the embedded framework of the social and relational structure of personhood (131-134, 137). This role, of course, in Torrance's theology, is Christologically rooted and conditioned. Flett notes, quite rightfully, the centrality of Jesus Christ for Torrance's anthropology—"Jesus Christ is both the image and the reality of God and as such, the 'Archetypal and Dominical' [Hu]man from whom all that is truly human is derived, and to whom all humanity must be referred" (132). It is Christ, then, who is the analogate for human priestly being and action. It is also here that one misses a larger conversation,

especially with Eastern Orthodoxy; Torrance's thought evidences many affinities, in this regard, with the Orthodox tradition, notably that of Dumitru Staniloae. Staniloae, in fact, may have been fruitful to the task of widening the cultural trajectory of the analysis, particularly in terms of ecological issues; Staniloae would, as well, provide a promising dialogue partner in assessing the ecclesial dimension of this task (something to which, as Flett observes, Torrance was not allergic).

The final chapters of the book bring the argument to a close around Torrance's theology of culture (ch 5) and Flett's own constructive furthering of a "Trinitarian theology of culture" (ch 6). Because Torrance himself did not develop or elaborate an explicit theology of culture, Flett sets before himself the task of extrapolating the threads that run through Torrance's body of work to weave together a coherent, concrete position. Flett's attempt revolves around expositing and clarifying Torrance's notion of the "social coefficient of knowledge," which is an embodied and knowing relation between a created "coordinate" and an uncreated reality, or fulcrum (237). Social coefficients provide meeting points for objective and subjective realities through relations that generate structures of meaning. Flett writes that these "put the human subject in contact with an external world, and upon the basis of this contact lodge meaning and significance in a place that is external to the self. This is accomplished through socially constructed matrices, with their symbols, rituals, and structures.... [T]he social coefficient of knowledge is to provide the human person with a heuristic, dialogical, and multi-leveled structure that refers to the openness of the human person not only to the objective created world or to other persons but also to an objective and transcendent ground of meaning [i.e., the Triune God]." (167, 203). Flett turns from here to an "improvisational" transposition of Torrance's use of this notion to the social ecology of human culture in an effort to generate a theology of culture that is missional and transformative. That missional work, an embodied work for sure, flows from the relational-epistemological matrix—the social coefficient—of the church, notably from the priestly ministry of Christ and the church's own priesthood constituted in worship;

but, as Flett argues, that worship is not self-contained and enclosed, but interrelational and outflowing, such that the church, as constituted by the knowledge of God in Christ, is “thrust into the world as a royal priesthood, whose activity in the world of culture will not only bear witness to the God she worships, but will advance God’s mission in the world through cultural transformation” (222).

While this project is a published edition of a dissertation completed at King’s College, it is by no means inaccessible or hampered by the usual *accouterments* of such literature. It holds up quite well as an extended summary of Torrance’s work on an array of interconnected issues and as a fair deployment of the structures of Torrance’s thought to an area that the theologian himself did not engage in an explicit way. Students who wish to read Torrance will have here a reliable concise guide to navigate the technical complexities of the terrain; as well, research students will want to take note of this project as exemplifying how to write a clear, accessible dissertation that does not drown its subject in a blizzard of jargon and obfuscatory style. Frustration as a reader of this project results not from authorial choices, but publishing ones—lack of an index; an extended table of contents (“project outline”) housed in the back, in lieu of said index; unfortunate font and typographical choices, especially for headings and subheadings.

But, I started this review where I did, with a range of theological works that engage culture (or, those known to be “theologians of culture”), because one would expect a book of this kind to engage that taxonomy of modern and contemporary culture and to argue for its elected figure as contributing or contesting the configuration of theology and culture at issue. Aside from a mention of Kathryn Tanner in the first line of the introduction, the fact that this question has been a hotly debated and discussed one in recent theology disappears from the pages. The book concludes with a fairly lengthy summary, useful indeed to readers, but one could wish for here, instead, at least a short disquisition on where Torrance fits (or departs from) the wider theological discussion.

The way that Flett develops Torrance’s thought is indeed exciting and engaging, and well worth reading; in addition to the quite able elucidation of Torrance, it may well be that Flett has opened the door for others to follow-up and show how Torrance’s work relates to others’.

Michael D. Gibson, Vanderbilt University
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Congratulations to **Richard E. Burnett**, of Erskine Theological Seminary on the publication of his long-awaited edited volume, *The Westminster Handbook to Karl Barth*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2013).

The **Thomas F. Torrance Theological Fellowship** will meet on Friday afternoon, November 22 in CC-344 (Convention Center) from 1 P.M. to 4 P.M. **Thomas A. Noble** of Nazarene Theological Seminary will be this year’s speaker. This is listed as P22-205 in the AAR booklet.

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